



# Shopping for Change

## MassDEP Supermarket Recycling Program

**R**ecycling food scraps is good for the environment and business! Supermarkets in Massachusetts are reducing, recovering, and recycling their food waste and saving money by participating in the state's voluntary supermarket recycling certification program.

### How It Works

After identifying food waste diversion as a focus area for waste reduction in Massachusetts, MassDEP partnered with the Massachusetts Food Association (MFA) to increase organics recycling at supermarkets in their state. Supermarkets are a major organics generator with over 400 supermarkets in the state generating an estimated 90,600 tons of organic material per year. Mass DEP and MFA established a voluntary Supermarket Recycling Program Certification (SRPC) program to promote reducing, recycling, and reusing food waste and other materials. Now, supermarkets in Massachusetts can obtain SRPC status by annually certifying to the Mass DEP that they have a comprehensive recycling and reuse program in place. Recycling and reuse programs can include food donations to local food shelters and diversion of food scraps, cardboard, paper, plants, and wood boxes to composting. In turn, MassDEP provides technical assistance to their supermarket partners in developing their program, such as the *Supermarket Composting Handbook*. Supermarkets also can contact MassDEP for advice and more information.

### What Makes SRPC Successful

Participating supermarkets save money, receive positive recognition, and regulatory relief. Waste disposal represents a significant and increasing operating cost for the supermarket industry, especially in Massachusetts where disposal fees range from \$80-\$100 per ton. Since 75-85% of a supermarket's waste stream is biodegradable, composting can be a lower cost alternative to disposal for these stores. Participating stores also improve their compliance with existing Massachusetts waste disposal bans and receive relief from comprehensive inspection of their store's truckloads of trash for prohibited recyclable materials. Stores also reap the benefits of resulting public recognition of their program, which leads to positive motivation, community awareness, positive public relations, and competitive advantage.

[www.epa.gov/organicmaterials/fd-study.htm](http://www.epa.gov/organicmaterials/fd-study.htm)

The main keys to Massachusetts's successful supermarket recycling programs are senior leadership support and communication among all parties, including feedback.



### Everyone Benefits

As of August 2005, 62 supermarkets, nine haulers, and six composting facilities were recovering organics to achieve a 60-75% recycling rate of food scraps and other organics in Massachusetts. On average, participating supermarkets saved more than \$4,400 per year per store and collectively recycled 65.9% of supermarkets' total waste stream avoiding \$700,000 in reduced disposal costs.

MassDEP and MFA hope to have at least 100 supermarkets recycling organics in their state by fall 2006, with the long-term goals of all Massachusetts supermarkets participating in a voluntary initiative by 2008.

### Type of Recovery: Source Reduction, Feed Animals, Industrial Use, Composting

**Program:** MassDEP SRPC

Massachusetts state government

**Website:** [www.mass.gov/dep/recycle/supermkt.htm#srpc](http://www.mass.gov/dep/recycle/supermkt.htm#srpc)

#### Cool Facts:



Supermarkets can save \$3,000-\$20,000 per store annually by recovering and recycling their food residuals



The program achieved a 60-75% recycling rate of organics in 2005.